

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) today announced \$75,394 for the Varick Volunteer Fire Company in Geneva through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP).

"I am thrilled to announce this federal funding to help the Varick Volunteer Fire Company upgrade its capabilities and continue to ensure the security and safety of local communities," **said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus**

. "Grants like this enable local first responders, many of them volunteers, to improve their already heroic efforts to protect our communities. In Congress, I have joined colleagues on both sides of the aisle to request increased funding for this critical grant program. I am also proud to announce that this week the House of Representatives passed legislation to help volunteer first responders, like the firefighters in Varick, by increasing tax assistance for these community heroes."

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP) awards grants to firefighters, emergency response personnel and first responders to enhance response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of first responders and the citizens in their communities. AFGP grants provide resources for training, first responder health and safety programs, and response equipment and vehicles.

Since 2004, AFGP has provided a total of almost \$2.2 billion nationwide to first-responder organizations to purchase response equipment, personal protective equipment, and vehicles. In fiscal year 2007, AFGP will award approximately \$490 million directly to fire departments and EMS organizations to enhance their response capabilities.

Legislation cosponsored by Arcuri to provide tax assistance for volunteer emergency responders to help area fire departments retain and recruit volunteers was included in the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act (H.R. 3997) which passed the House on Monday.

In March, Arcuri joined 100 Members of Congress in writing to the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee requesting additional funding for the AFG Program as well as Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants that provide assistance to local departments to increase the number of first responders.

In June, the House passed the fiscal year 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which included a substantial increase in funding for AFGP and SAFER. The bill includes \$800 million for AFGP in fiscal year 2008.

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